DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 360 286 SP 034 646

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TITLE Control Strategies in Conferencing: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Micropolitical Strategies in Supervision.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, GA, April 12-16, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Discourse Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; *Interaction Process Analysis; Lesson Observation Criteria; Observation; Personal Autonomy; Success; *Supervisory Methods; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Evaluation; *Teacher Supervision

ABSTRACT

The study reported here analyzed the interaction performance of instructional supervisors as they conducted postobservation conferences with teachers. Seven supervisor-teacher pairs consisting of varying combinations of experienced, beginning, and novice teachers and supervisors were examined, to determine status indicators such as jargon use, verbal complexity, and using the other person's name; informing versus controlling the interaction; dominance strategies such as total words, message unit turns, intended interruptions, and minimal responses; and the success level of the conference. Findings suggest that conference success is greatly influenced by strategy patterns, as the match between the strategy use of the supervisor and the teacher is more important than the experience levels of either participant. The most successful conferences were characterized by teacher-controlled dominance strategies, close matching of status indicators, and supervisory reliance on suggestions rather than direction, except in the case of a beginning teacher coupled with an experienced supervisor. Implications for supervisory practice, philosophy, and preparation are discussed. (Contains 62 references.) (JDD)

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Control Strategies in Conferencing: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Micropolitical Strategies in Supervision

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 1993, Atlanta, Georgia.

SP034646

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Control Strategies in Conferencing:
A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Micropolitical Strategies in Supervision

Instructional supervision focuses on the improvement of instruction through interaction with teachers. All three models of supervisory interaction (clinical, differentiated, and developmental) rely on supervisor-teacher conferencing to achieve instructional improvement (Glatthorn (1984), Goldhammer (1969), Glickman (1990), Waite (1992). However, research indicates that the major goals of supervisory conferencing (behavioral change and reflection on the part of teachers) often are not achieved and supervisor prescriptions are frequently met with teacher defensiveness, resistance, or compliance rather than reflection and growth (Blumberg, 1974; Zeichner & Liston, 1984).

The most widely used model, clinical supervision, with its cycle of pre-conference, observation, analysis, post-observation conference, and analysis, is particularly dependent on the communicative skills and professional judgements of the supervisor. In an analysis of the intentions for clinical supervision as indicated by Goldhammer (1969) and the effects of supervisory communication during the cycle, Rettalick (1990) found that communicative action, as defined by Habermas (1970), is used extensively by supervisors in attempts to align and repair miscommunications that may occur between the supervisor and the teacher. However, although supervisory interaction is primarily verbal in nature, the preparation of supervisors to conduct conferences "often emphasizes observation and evaluation skills but deemphasizes skills needed for conferring with teachers" (McNergney and Francis, 1986, p. 70).

Supervisory Research on Conferencing

There exists a small body of research that has explored the nature of the conference (e.g., Retallick, 1990, Roberts, 1990, 1992a; Waite, 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1985). Such studies raise serious questions concerning the degree of collegiality inherent in the conference situation and suggest the existence of social and political inhibitors to the effectiveness of the interaction (Roberts & Blase, forthcoming; Blumberg, 1974, Pajak & Glickman, 1989, Retallick, 1990, Roberts, 1992a). One possible social inhibitor, conferencing interaction, has had comparatively little attention from researchers on instructional supervision. Therefore, inquiry into conferencing communication has not been a priority for research on supervisory reflection and growth (Glickman & Bey, 1990; Holland, 1989).

As a whole, general research on instructional supervision imply that conversational control issues in conferencing interaction may be determinants in the successful approximation of conferencing goals. Acquiring metacommunicative competence, understanding maxims of conversation, and avoiding communication blunders appear to be critical skills needed by instructional supervisors to attain conference success (Roberts, 1992b). However, communicative competencies (Hymes, 1972) that may be essential to these skills have not been identified (Holland, 1989) nor have effective strategies for acquisition and use been determined (Holland, 1989). Conferencing is the part of the clinical cycle where interaction is most likely to breakdown; however, "until supervisors realize how

and why they behave as they do in conferences, chances for changing such behaviors seem remote" (McNergney & Francis, 1986, p. 197).

Supervisory Elements of Conferencing: Role and Control

Scholars in supervision remain divided on the issue of supervisor role during the conference. Mosher and Purpel (1972) and Alphonso, Firth, and Neville (1975) represent those who advocate the supervisor as expert or as one who teaches teachers. Acheson and Gall (1987), Grimmett (1981), and Sergiovanni and Starratt (1985) support a more facilitative, collaborative approach. Glickman (1990) favors determining the supervisor role by analyzing the developmental level of the teacher. This analysis indicates which supervisory approach may be effective. Approaches range from directive [supervisor as expert] to collaborative [supervisor as facilitator/enabler] to non-directive [teacher as expert].) Each of these perspectives of supervisor role relies on the interpersonal skills, communicative skills, and professional judgements of the supervisor during the conference interaction. The supervisory roles described above are distinguished by characteristic behaviors (Beach & Reinhartz, 1989; Glickman, 1990; Oliva, 1989). Exposure to and familiarity with these behaviors often engender certain role expectations upon the part of the teacher and of the supervisor (Holland, 1989; Oliva, 1989). Sergiovanni (1987) emphasizes that teacher evaluation, a common component of conference interaction, is a subjective interaction; therefore, it is dependent on cultural influences and contexts, such as shared expectations. Violation of these expectations can result in conflict or breakdown of communication; thereby inhibiting the conference interaction (Holland, 1989; Roberts, 1992a, 1992b).

In addition to expectations, elements of power are also present within the conference (Smyth, 1991). Flinders (1991) suggests the term "supervision" is a metaphor that generates the image of the profession by drawing from the domains of business and industry. "The term signifies the responsibilities of one person to oversee the work of another...its cultural baggage is not lost in the transition from one field to another" (p. 104). Supervisors may be viewed as powerful or threatening because of formal or referent authority inherent in the political hierarchy of the role. Pajak and Glickman (1989) found "teachers discriminated strongly in their perceptions of information and controlling conferences. "Such views may have a negative influence on the level of collaboration that can be established and maintained (Blumberg, 1974; Retallick, 1990)).

Roberts' (1992a) examination of politeness strategies and face-threatening acts in supervisory conferencing found that the experience level of the supervisor was a good predictor of negative strategy use, e.g., less experienced supervisors constrained communication more often. Roberts (1992a) found that "speech acts on the part of instructional supervisors are intrinsically imbued with elements of distance, power, and

threat" (p. 2). Related research by Waite (1992) suggests that teachers have resources that somewhat constrain supervisor control and attributes some conference disruption to forces outside the processes of supervisor-teacher interaction; however, his data "demonstrate the processes supervisors use to exert control over conference direction and over teachers while in conference" (p. 368). The extant research into conversational aspects of conferencing indicate that communication skills are an integral part of conferencing, that supervisors use identifiable control strategies during conferencing, and miscommunication and misuse of strategies are prevalent in conferencing.

Micropolitical Elements of Conferencing: Power and Control

The findings of conference research suggest the cultural and political nature of power and control. "There is politics in language, and communication is inseparable from it [politics]" (Lakoff, 1985, p. 13). Lakoff (1985) defines politics as "the allocation and use of power"--power as "the ability to get one's needs met, wishes fulfilled, goals achieved"--the politics of language as "how we encode our needs in linguistic form..and we make it more probable that we will get them [goals/needs] met..." (p. 3). Lakoff states that "micropolitics...has to do with the allocation of power among individuals ..in situations of relative intimacy and normally in reciprocal discourse." Political decisions depend on conversational strategies.

The supervisory conferencing interaction reflects these definitions at the micropolitical level. Giroux's (1981) analysis of the nature of supervisory communication found that supervision practices follow the technocratic-rational approach to management; that is, its normative nature emphasizes supervisory agendas at the expense of teacher [developmental] needs. Conferencing follows the micropolitical pattern where "power is allocated, and reinforced, on the basis of participants' conversational behaviors: who takes the most, and the longest, turns; who interrupts whom..." (Lakoff, 1985, p. 8).

In supervisory interactions, "power refers to the ranking, status, or social station of the two persons...the teacher essentially stands lower than the supervisor in social, or at least hierarchical station..." (Roberts, 1992a, p. 3). The political, formal, and ritualized nature of the conference, makes discourse analysis, especially conversation and sociolinguistic analyses, well-suited to the examination of micropolitical patterns as they exist in supervisory conferencing (Retallick, 1990; Roberts, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Waite, 1990).

Sociolinguistic Elements of Conferencing: Language and Control

Sociolinguists (Grimshaw, 1989; Hindess, 1982; Infante, et al., 1990) generally accept the constructivist premise that language creates reality through the regulation of social

practice (largely through selection and repression of information or access to information). Thus, power resides in the use of language, both narratively and conversationally (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979; Labov, 1972; Searle, 1969; Trudgill, 1974). Conversational control is one manifestation of power in language (Fowler, et. al., 1979). Control in conversational interactions may be maintained in a variety of ways, some of which are semantic selection to emphasize distance, language selection to emphasize status, or access limitation by emphasize dominance (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974).

Semantic Selection

Conversational distancing, as a strategy of language control, can be achieved in two ways: (a) by status-laden language and (b) by degrees of controlling language (Halliday, 1978). Status-laden language is use of jargon, use of multisyllabic words, and use of proper names). Increased formality level [complexity of syntax] and use of jargon at the same time imply a shared knowledge base and enhance social distance (Bernstein, 1971; Flinders, 1991). The degrees to which language limits or constrains freedom of action range along a continuum of informing to controlling (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Pajak and Glickman (1989) established that teachers perceive differences in direct supervision language which informs and language which controls; i.e., the difference between what a teacher may/might do and what a teacher shall/must do. Both strategies, distancing and controlling/informing language, are common in conversational situations.

Dominance

Conversational dominance is the unequal sharing of conversational control by the speakers (Coates, 1986). Brazil, Coulthard, and Johns (1980) use dominance as a technical term to designate the speaker who has the greater(est) linguistic choice in a given interaction. Leet-Pellegrini (1980) used linguistic features such as talkativeness/verbosity, interruptions, and minimal responses to study the variables of gender, expertise, and control. His findings supported the reliability of linguistic dominance indicators as measures in conversational analysis.

Consequences of Control

Informational environment enables all individuals to listen, internalize, and choose courses of action. Controlling environments restrict choice and externally impose upon the individual a predetermined course of action (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Pajak & Glickman, 1989). Pajak and Glickman (1989) found that teachers gave highest ratings to conferences in which the supervisor communicated information with suggestions, mid-range ratings to conferences in which the supervisor communicated information only, and low ratings to conferences in

which supervisors communicated information with directives (controlling environments). These ratings may indicate teachers' expectations of and desire for conversational balance in professional interactions. Such expectations would be conducive to collaborative, reflective interaction as endorsed by Grimmett (1981) and Sergiovanni (1987).

Method

Current thought in communication research advocates a combined structural-functional analysis method when "a researcher seeks to describe recurring patterns of interaction, explain observed pattern by interpretive and behavioral rules, and evaluate or critique the extent to which an interaction has attained communicative objectives: (Smith, 1988, p. 241). This paper reports part of a larger concurrent qualitative project conducted in southwestern and southern public school districts. A structural analysis (focus on selection and dominance indicators) of this data was needed to accompanying previous data results from this population based on a functional analysis of linguistic factors by Roberts (1988, 1992a). Roberts' analysis of politeness indicators did not address control strategies, therefore, questions examined by this study include: What conversational control strategies, if any, are present during conferencing: Who uses these strategies? With what frequency? To what degree? Is there any discernable relationship between the experience levels of the participants and the use of conversational control? Do these strategies have an effect on conference success?

Speech Accommodation Theory, originated by Giles and Wiemann (1987), was used to guide the structural analysis of these data. The major premise of this theory is that, during communication, "people try to accommodate [emphasis added] or adjust their styles of speech to others" (Infante, et. al, 1990, p. 216). Accommodation strategies are either convergent (individuals adapt to each other by slowing down, speeding up, lengthening talk time, etc.) or divergent (individuals purposefully use contrary speech strategies to accentuate differences between communicators. Divergent markers such as dominance and semantic selection indicators are associated with power and control strategies, e.g., powerless individuals tend to adopt the verbal and vocal styles of those with power and powerful individuals tend to dominate and monopolize talk opportunities (Infante, et al., 1990). The descriptive results of this study represent an attempt to add information to the area of conferencing interaction.

Data:

The findings presented here constitute an analysis of the interaction performance of instructional supervisors as they conducted post-observation conferences with teachers. Students engaged in supervision coursework were invited to participate as an optional method of fulfilling course content. All interested students, although of various professional backgrounds and experience levels, had similar instruction in supervision and were familiar

with the foci and theory base of the larger concurrent study. Students were requested to participate and tape (without the presence of an investigator) a series of conferencing cycles. The students then selected one "typical, successful conference" to submit along with supporting data (participant data sheets, summaries, contextual histories).

The seven cases to be analyzed were selected from a larger database of over one hundred cases based on a preliminary analysis of data from two protocols including the supervisors' written reports documenting case backgrounds and investigators' interpretations and transcripts of video- and audiotapes of conferences. Selection parameters included an emphasis on obtaining the broadest possible base of representation by experience and gender within the sample. Participant experience was characterized as novice (first conference), postulate (student from outside the field of education with less than 1 year of experience), beginning (1 year of experience or less), and experienced (1+ years of experience). In several cases the database (taped conference observation and documents) was triangulated by interviews in order to clarify significant points.

Procedure:

Transcriptions of audiotapes were identified by speaker turn and included false starts and hesitations. These transcripts were then unitized by "natural conversational units" as defined by Simon and Boyer (1970). Simultaneous talk was registered as MLT (Mean Length of Turn) credit for both speakers and as an Intended Interruption/Minimal Response as suggested by context. Indicator pattern matches across case reports were sought and cross-case conclusions were drawn.

Sociolinguistic Measures:

To examine whether and what type of control strategies might be present in the conferences, the entire post-conference audiotape and transcripts were used for each of the seven conferences. Because of the audio nature of the data, interest was restricted to verbal rather than nonverbal speech acts including both paralinguistic and extralinguistic vocal occurrences such as subvocalized responses and laughter.

Semantic Selection Indicators

To examine the use of semantic selection in supervisory conferencing, the documents and transcripts were searched for two types of speech acts, status-laden language (Brown & Levinson, 1987 ; Roberts, 1992a) and informing versus controlling language (Pajak & Glickman, 1989). The degree of status-laden language was derived by analyzing the (a) use

of jargon, (b) use of speaker nominatives (proper names), and (c) the complexity level of supervisor utterances and teacher utterances for each conferences.

Jargon was manually calculated by the researcher according to frequency of educational jargon usage (count included terms such as grouping, cooperative learning, etc.) Complexity levels were determined by computer analysis, using the QUEsoftware grammar-checker program, RightWriter (R) V3.1 copyright 1989, RightSoft, which is based on the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Index[1]. "The Readability Index is equivalent to the Overall Reading Grade Level (OGL) for the document" (RightWriter [computer manual], 1990, p. 7-6). On the readability range 1 (first grade) to 50 (unintelligible), a Flesch-Kincaid score of 6-10 is good (RightWriter [computer manual], 1990). A sample text analysis using RightWriter is attached as an appendix.

In general, written language is more highly lexicalized than spoken language, has a more complex vocabulary, and has a greater lexical density (Halliday, 1978). To compensate for the computer analysis of narrative, a standard unit of 3.0 was added to each Complexity Index Code; the resulting figure represents the verbalization level of the talk[2]. Use of proper names by each of the speakers was determined by investigator review.

Controlling language speech acts were visually identified and coded as (a) Information Only, (b) Information with Suggestions (might, could can, may), or (c) Information with Directives (should, must, "I want you to") to indicate the various degrees of direction indicated by use of commands, suggestions or modalities (drawn from Pajak & Glickman, 1989) (See Table 1). Interrogative utterances were omitted from this analysis because they

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[1] Readability formulas are widely used by scholars in reading and language arts; however, many fields of education do not use them and may be unfamiliar with the applications, reliability, and validity of such tools. For an analysis of the reliability and validity of readability formulas, the reader is directed to the cited works of Klare (1974-75, 1976). Feldman (1983) and Judd (1981) reviewed applications and reliability for various computerized readability programs and Standal (1987) analyzed the validity of computerized versions of readability formulas. The Flesch-Kincaid formula is the United States Government Department of Defense Standard (DOD MIL-M-387884B). The government requires its use by contractors producing manuals for the armed services.

[2] Miller (1973) ranks the capacity level of one's meaning vocabulary at 4 to 10 reading levels above the independent level (pp. 271-272). This recognized "rule of thumb" for written to verbal language transfer serves as the basis for the conservative addition of 3 reading levels to the RightWriter complexity index score.

were completely accounted for in the previous functional (Politeness Theory) analysis by Roberts (1988, 1992a, 1992b).

Conversational Dominance Indicators

Three aspects of conversational dominance were coded, verbosity (amount and length of talk turns), Intended Interruptions, and Minimal Responses. Verbosity was determined by separating the conference transcripts into Supervisor Talk and Teacher Talk. Each talk portion was computer-analyzed for Total Number of Words. Because voiced representation is a phonetically closer representation of verbalization, the transcripts of Talk were then marked for voiced syllabic representation (i.e., standard syllabic representation of the word 'interested' is in/ter/est/ed; voiced syllabic representation is in/t'rest/ed) and tallied by the investigator.

Turns (message unit turns) were defined as a connected flow of behavior with a single, identifiable intent of elocutionary form (Markel, 1975). The minimum size could be a single, interpretable sound, such as "uhhuh" if not used as an active listening, non-interruptive indicator; the maximum unit size was the complete utterance of one speaker occurring between the other speaker's turns. Total Turns were then tallied for each talk portion.

A Mean Length of Turn was arrived at by dividing the total number of syllables by the total number of turns in each talk portion of each case. Thus, the frequency, proportion, and duration of talk was determined for each speaker (postulant, novice, beginner, and experienced supervisors and teachers) of each of the seven dyads (See Table 1).

"The use of interruptions can be interpreted as a way of controlling conversation (Coates, 1986, p. 130). Two types of interruptions were examined: (a) Intended Interruption (also known as cooptive simultaneities) which are bids for conversation control (i.e., violations of turn-taking) and (b) Overlaps (instances of slight over-anticipation by the next speaker). The particular overlap examined was the Minimal Response encourager or cooperative simultaneity (words such as "uhhuh," "yeah", or "right") that facilitate continued discussion (drawn from Coates, 1986; Murray, 1985). The minimal response is often linked with active listening strategies in the field of supervision (Glickman, 1990; Roberts, 1992a).

Non-Sociolinguistic Measure: Conference Success

Finally, a non-sociolinguistic measure was used, Conference Success. Success was determined by examining the degree of conflict, face-threat, and negative strategies in each case as previously shown by Roberts (1992a) and then placing the case conferences on a four-

point Likert scale ranging from very successful to very unsuccessful as listed by Roberts (1992a). This placement required reliance on Searle's (1969) speech-act theory in determining speaker intent.

Limitations of the Study

Labov and Fanshel (1977) warn researchers that conversation analysis presents a microanalyses/aggression paradox. This means the more closely interaction is scrutinized, the more likely it is that participants will appear to have behaved aggressively, self-servingly, or otherwise negatively. Researchers must not allow microanalysis to skew investigator perception and interpretation. Cicourel (1980) warns of the danger of reification when the researcher seeks to find something significant in every utterance of a social transaction. One way to minimize these pitfalls is to be cognizant of limitations inherent in qualitative designs. Simply put, expectations of complete explanations of complex human interactions are not research reality and this must be kept uppermost in interpretive awareness.

Population Limitations

This study is part of a larger study. This fact pre-determined both the participant selection and number of cases used. Such limitations have negative implications both qualitatively (lack of adequate context and naturalistic processes) and quantitatively (population studied is too small to justify the cross category variable comparison that is a usual extension of qualitative analysis or possible generalization to other populations).

Because the participants in this study are completing university coursework and have elected to participate as an optional way to fulfill course requirements, a certain degree of contrivance and/or coercion may be present in the population. In addition, each of the participants has been exposed to the conscious and unconscious supervisory biases of the instructor through material, text, lecture, and method selection.

Method Limitations

Nonverbal communication often has "a pivotal influence on how we understand one another, both in and outside the classroom" (Flinders, 1991). The study uses vocalic coding which does not attend to nonverbal behaviors; therefore, the enhancing, ameliorating, or negating impact of such behaviors on conversational strategies are lost. An example of such a behavior would be a direct request ameliorated with a smile and a softening of vocal register.

Vocalic incidences are present in many different forms (i.e., prosadic, sequential, and relational; just three of many variations). Each of these forms gives unique information about conversational transaction. Although it would not be economical in terms of time and effort to attempt an analysis that includes a full range of vocalic indicators, the choice to narrow the vocalic incidents to one series of indicators (control strategies) further constrains the contextual background and inevitably results in a less complete picture of the interactions.

Theory Limitations

Gender issues were not addressed by this study due to the overwhelming evidence of power differentials that favor males in mixed gender encounters. Studies into these well-researched phenomena indicate that gender-bias is most prevalent in conversational dominance and exists throughout all levels and all encounters of human, social interaction.

Conference Control Strategies--Findings

General Findings

Status Indicators

Frequency data for each case is presented by participant in Table 1. In Table 2 cases are ranked by success level and values are given for differences from the mean, percentages of intracase variance (where applicable), and S/T dominance for certain indicators (Personal Nominative, and Total Words).

As shown in Table 1, jargon use ranged from 0-15 for supervisors with a mean of 5.86 and 2-12 for teachers for a mean of 4.57. Six jargon combinations (Hi/Low, Avg/Avg, Low/Hi, Low avg, Hi/Avg, and Avg/Low) were present in this data (Table 2) across all four success levels and no clear patterns of association emerged. Complexity levels ranged from 7.58 to 11.84 for supervisors with a mean of 8.16 and 5.89 to 10.68 for teachers with a mean of 8.52 (Table 1). Variations from the mean in complexity showed a slight association with success levels in that low positive dominance of supervisors was present in the very successful conferences, slightly higher positive dominance of teachers was present in the successful conferences, increasingly higher positive dominance of supervisors was seen in the unsuccessful cases, then positive dominance by supervisor returned to a low rating in the one very unsuccessful case (Table 2). Personal Nominative use was dominated by supervisors throughout the study and across success levels with a range of 0-5 and a mean of 1.57. Only one instance of teacher nominative use was recorded.

Case	Supervisor/ Teacher	Gender	Exp Level	Semantic Selection Strategies						Dominance Strategies					Success Level of the Conference
				Status			Informing/Controlling								
				Jar Use	Com Level	Pers Norm	Info Only	Info with Sugg	Info with Dir	Total Words	Message Unit Turns	Mean Length of Turns	Intended Interruptions	Minimal Responses	
1	S: Alice	F	exp	5	9.38	3	12	15	11	4,864	73	84	16	25	Very
	T: Terry	F	beg	4	8.24	0				4,113	86	72	15	11	Successful
2	S: Diana	F	exp	0	8.60	1	4	10	3	1,198	25	57	1	8	Successful
	T: Gillian	F	exp	4	10.68	0				1,194	25	53	1	8	
3	S: Mary	F	exp	8	11.84	0	27	9	7	2,702	86	38	4	13	Unsuccessf
	T: Pat	F	exp	2	5.89	1				903	36	34	6	65	
4	S: David	M	beg	9	9.27	0	27	21	3	4,708	125	48	15	36	Unsuccessf
	T: Larry	M	exp	4	6.13	0				2,539	79	30	15	63	
5	S: Wilma	F	beg	2	7.58	0	9	5	0	1,643	61	34	7	7	Successful
	T: Judy	F	exp	12	9.68	0				3,683	59	80	5	6	
6	S: Jill	F	novice	2	10.30	2	25	10	11	2,818	28	46	25	6	Very
	T: James	M	exp	4	9.76	4				2,657	77	45	30	6	Unsuccessf
7	S: Craig	M	post	15	9.44	5	10	9	0	2,642	64	53	7	13	Very
	T: Debra	F	exp	2	8.78	0				3,110	67	59	19	5	Successful

Table 1. Frequencies of Control Strategy Phenomena in Seven Case Study Conferences

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Case	Supervisor/ Teacher	Gender	Exp Level	Semantic Selection Strategies: Status: Jar Use	Com Level	Para Norm	Informing/Controlling: Info Only	Info with Sugg	Info with Dir	Dominance Strategies: Total Words	Message Unit Turns	Mean Length of Turns	Intended Interruptions	Minimal Responses	Success Level of the Conference
7	S: Craig	M	Post	Hi	+.66	+4	+3.67	+2.67	-6.33				Lo	+8 Avg	Very
	T: Debra	F	Exp	Lo	--	--	$\bar{X}$=3.33			+468 8.1%	+3	+8	+12 Avg	Lo	Successful
1	S: Alice	F	Exp	Avg	+.64	+3	- .66	+3.33	-1.66	+751 R.4%		+12	+1 Avg	+14 Hi	Very
	T: Terry	F	Exp	Avg	--	--	$\bar{X}$=1.266				+13		Avg	Lo	Successful
5	S: Wilma	F	Beg	Lo	--	=	+ .44	+4.33	-4.66		+2		+2 Lo	+1 Lo	Successful
	T: Judy	F	Exp	Hi	+2.1	=	$\bar{X}$=4.66			+2,030 38.3%		+46	Lo	Lo	
2	S: Diana	F	Exp	Lo	--	+1	-1.66	+4.34	-2.66	+104 4.5%	=	+4	=Lo	=Lo	Successful
	T: Gillian	F	Exp	Avg	+2.08	--	$\bar{X}$=5.66				=		=Lo	=Lo	
3	S: Mary	F	Exp	Hi	+5.6	+1	+12.66	-5.33	-7.33	+1,799 49.9%	+51	=4	Lo	Avg	Unsuccessf
	T: Pat	F	Exp	Lo	--	--	$\bar{X}$=14.33						+2 Lo	+52 Hi	
4	S: David	M	Beg	Hi	+3.14	=	+10.0	+4.00	-14.00	+2,169 29.9%	+46	+2	= Avg	Hi	Unsuccessf
	T: Larry	M	Exp	Avg	--	=	$\bar{X}$=17.0						= Avg	+27 Hi	
6	S: Jill	F	Novice	Avg	+ .5	+2	+9.67	-5.33	-4.33	+161 2.9%	+1	+1	Hi	=Lo	Very
	T: James	M	Exp	Lo	--	--	$\bar{X}$=15.33					+5Hi		=Lo	Unsuccessf

Table 2. Control Strategy Differences and Participant Dominance Patterns in Seven Case Study Conferences, Rank Ordered by Success Ratings

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Informing versus Controlling Language Indicators

A total of 114 information only statements (mean=16.29), 79 information with suggestion statements (mean=11.29) and 35 information with directive statements (mean=5.00) were recorded. In Table 1, information only frequencies range from 4-27; information with suggestion statements range from 5-21; information with directive statements range from 0-11. Table 2 reflects the relationship between success levels and language use across these three categories: low frequencies with category balance are associated with more successful conferences while higher frequencies and imbalance across language indicators are apparent with less successful conferences. Less successful conferences tended to have more information-only statements.

Dominance Strategies

Dominance strategies showed the clearest relationships with conference success in four indicator columns: Total Words, Message Unit Turns, and the relationship between Intended Interruptions and Minimal Responses. Total words of supervisors were 20,575 with a range of 1,198-4,864 and a mean of 2,939.28. Total words of teachers were 18,199 with a range of 903-4,113 and a mean of 2,599.86. Table 2 reveals close convergence (balance of words spoken between the participants) and/or dominance in teacher total talk is associated with more successful conference ratings, while increased supervisor dominance (strong imbalance) is associated with less successful conferences.

Message unit turns totaled 512 (mean=73.14) and a range of 25-125 for supervisors and 373 (mean=53.28) with a range of 25-86 for teachers. Both divergent patterns (high teacher frequency=very successful; high supervisor frequency=unsuccessful) and balanced convergent patterns (balance=successful) were associated with conference success across cases (Table 2) for this indicator. Mean Length of Turn was the most balanced dominance indicator across cases with the exception of one largely variant case (Case 5) and did not seem closely associated with success rating differences.

Teachers performed 91 (mean=13.00) intended interruptions to 75 (mean= 10.71) performed by supervisors; however a great deal of convergence was seen throughout cases on this indicator (Table 2) independent of both frequency and success. Teachers also dominated in the Minimal Response category with 164 (mean=23.43) to supervisors' 108 (mean 15.43). Convergence (balance) was associate with increased success for this indicator, while high teacher frequency/low supervisor frequency (divergence) was associated with less success.

Across these two categories a distinct pattern appears of balanced or teacher dominant interruptions with balanced or high supervisor minimum responses associated with increased

success: a hallmark of active listening on the part of supervisors or equally between participants. A similar unsuccessful pattern appears of balanced interruptions (low/low; avg/avg) with high teacher minimal responses (indicating supervisor monopoly verbalization) or high balanced minimal responses (indicating lack of communication) (See Table 2). The sole very unsuccessful case does shows reversed balanced or the two II/MR categories (Table 1) and high/high interruptions with low/low minimal responses (both indications of conflict and aggressive dominance strategies).

Specific Patterns

Across all seven cases one distinct semantic selection strategy and three distinct dominance strategies emerged. With only one exception, no teacher used the personal nominative, even when the supervisor repeatedly employed this strategy, indicating a clear awareness of status (semantic selection) in the conference situation.

All three dominance patterns centered around interruption pairs. In most cases, intended interruptions were initiated by the supervisor; the one exception to this involved a teacher who interrupted repeatedly to defend against perceived attacks (face threats) by the supervisor. In nearly all instances, intended interruptions were followed by minimal responses, regardless of who interrupted. In the few instances where minimal responses did not occur, intended interruptions by one speaker were followed by intended interruptions by the other speaker and evidence of conflict and/or anger were contextually present. In all cases, frequent interruptions by either party seemed to be perceived as argumentative and led to pointed remarks about the interruptions and/or contextually-present conflict strategies by the other party, followed by increasingly cryptic utterances. There were no other indicators which presented clearly defined patterns throughout all case instances.

Experienced vs Inexperienced Supervisors

Supervising participants consisted of three experienced, two beginning, one novice, and one postulate from the field of social services (counseling). All but one of the participant teachers were experienced. The four most successful conferences had the postulate, one beginning, and two experienced supervisors as participants. Although analysis of these cases using politeness theory (Roberts, 1992a) found that supervisor experience is a determining factor in the commission of face threatening acts, as shown in Table 2, experience of the supervisor was not found to be a determining factor in conference control strategies and conference success.

Case Characteristics

The following case descriptions were derived from the audiotapes, analyzed transcriptions, and written reports surrounding supervisor and teacher reflections on the conferences (See Table 1).

Case #1

Alice is an experienced supervisor interacting with a beginning teacher. She closely matched her verbal complexity level to that of the teacher and her jargon level to the teacher's average use of jargon. Alice used indirect methods of suggestion rather than direct requests. When not perceiving movement by the teacher toward a behavioral change or opinion position favored by Alice, this supervisor used repetition; stressed questions; employed the teacher's name, personal experiences, and allusions to personal expertise; and made statements concerning professional standards to encourage teacher agreement. An example of several of these strategies in one utterance is:

> S: I would say go ahead, Terry, and give them the information they need. And it's clear she needs the information, especially if we're still operating on the concept that we believe in learning. So we're going to want to try to foster those any we can, and, you know it doesn't have to be done in formal conference.

Alice dominated the conversation in Mean Length of Turn, but this was more than offset by the teacher's domination of Message Unit Turns. Although directive in her attitude, Alice was able to match her control strategies to the teacher and achieve a very successful conference outcome, possibly due to the teacher's willingness to be guided by an expert; teacher issues were raised, discussed, and resolved. This conference is especially notable for the high number of minimal responses by the supervisor, a strategy associated with expansion, elaboration, and reflection on the part of the teacher.

Case #2

Diana is an experienced supervisor conferencing with an experienced teacher, Gillian. Although Diana verbally approximates teacher usage in all status and dominance indicators, this conference results in a successful outcome rather that a very successful outcome. While there is no overt conflict, teacher issues are raised and consensus is forced from the teacher by Diana's repetition of suggestions and focus on resolving single issues rather than addressing a variety of teacher-stressed concerns.

S: What I hear you saying is that you thought the lesson was too long and that if you taught it you would break it up into segments to maybe reading the story first and...

S: ..that would be one of the things I would do to kind of break it up. Um. Some of the things that would help with this size group also I think might be to break up the group...

S: ...if you had divided them into groups, you could have compared one group's graphs to another group's graphs...

The only area in which the teacher had control is the level of verbal complexity, which may be perceived as a bid for recognition at a professional level.

Case #3

Mary is another experienced supervisor and Pat is an experienced teacher. Unfortunately, Mary's experience does not lead to a successful conference outcome. Mary failed to match the teacher in both jargon usage and verbal complexity (this score displays the greatest imbalance of all the cases). Mary's verbal strategies combined the worst of both informing and controlling; that is, she began the conference by monopolizing the interaction and giving vast amounts of unspecific, disconnected information. This was followed by a great number of directives (nearly twice that of any other supervisor) and all of her frequent suggestions were couched in extremely forceful language.

S: Visually check every single person and then say you know, So and So--Chuckie your thumbs aren't up.

S: Have them come in and have their stuff everywhere and you know then state your expected behavior.

S: And teach that behavior.

The result is a conference with an extremely high number of Minimal Responses from the teacher. The teacher is never given an opportunity to discuss an issue, give an opinion, or reflect on her performance.

Case #4

The participants of this conference are David, a beginning supervisor, and Larry, an experienced teacher. Like Case #3, this conference also had an unsatisfactory result

(unsuccessful) because no issues were resolved. However, in this case, David proved to be just the opposite of Mary. He relied on jargon, excessively praised the teacher, was apologetic in tone, interrupted frequently to provide the teacher with excuses or rationales for issues raised, and failed to pursue issues that were not responded to by the teacher.

> S: They can listen, listen, listen. Like you said, maybe way too much sometimes, but can they demonstrate that they have actually learned something? And, ah, it would be fun to, to work with you more and see how those things develop...and obviously we don't have the time to do that. What I did is I tried to, I want to show you 'cause this is kind of interesting. I didn't do, ah, I don't feel that I'm very good at this, but this is, this is what I did. And, in honesty, I didn't capture it all...
>
> (No response from T.)
>
> S: There were, there were some things that, maybe, were disruptive to themselves as far as the learning process. But, maybe had the expectations been, and, maybe they couldn't be, but maybe if they were more at the level of what you'd have for your junior high kids, maybe some of the kids would have had an opportunity to, to be pulled a little bit more out of the lesson...
>
> T: Hum.
>
> S: You know. So, ah, although the class was never disruptive, they were, maybe were distracted within their own little things.
>
> T: Right.
>
> S: Ahm. The resources. I really liked the dice and the graphs and the investigations and like you said earlier you, you probably would have gone about half as far and maybe even gotten into more that kind of stuff which I, the, the good activities were really good.

In effect, by avoiding discussion, the teacher controlled the conference. Yet there is no categorical indicator in which the teacher dominated; suggesting that David failed either through timidity or, more likely, out of a mistaken impression that such strategies are collaborative. This conference is notable for the high number of minimal responses given by both participants; the result was a conference with little communication.

Case #5

Wilma is a beginning supervisor; Judy, an experienced teacher. This conference is notable in that, in nearly every indictor frequency, the teacher had control of the conference. Rather than the unsuccessful outcome one might predict, the conference ended satisfactorily. Wilma guided the discussion with probing questions, restatements, and clarifications. There was no conflict, but there was also no commitment by the teacher to future growth and no indication of reflection. By achieving a nearly perfect balance in the Informing and Controlling Language categories (limiting her suggestions in favor of questions), Wilma relinquished any vestige of control that might have moved the conference from merely a successful outcome to a very successful outcome.

Case #6

Jill is the least experienced supervisor interacting with a very experienced teacher, who is also male (James). This conference had a very unsuccessful outcome. Although Table 2 shows fair balance across all indicators, Jill's verbal strategies focused on demands and orders. Her instances of information giving were often in the form of bald statements; her inquiries tended to be loaded questions, both of which were perceived negatively by the teacher. In addition, Jill tended to interrupt and seldom used Minimal Responses. The outcome was an argumentative conference in which each speaker interrupted the other to defend a point or position.

(Teacher interrupts supervisor.)

T: I don't agree with you.

S: Okay. You don't have to agree.

T: I don't agree. No, but I'm just telling you...

(Supervisor interrupts.)

S: Okay. But from my notes...

T: All right!

Control became conflict and no collaboration, reflection, or growth was possible.

Case #7

This postulate (outsider to supervision), Craig, utilized some knowledge of social service/counseling techniques in his approach with Debra, a highly committed, experienced teacher. Craig relinquished all of the dominance strategies to teacher control, and retained minimal status indicators. His verbal strategies focused on information giving and some suggestions, but almost completely avoided directives. Craig was fortunate that his reliance on probing, expanding, and clarifying questions was directed to a teacher who seemed prone to elaboration and reflection. This provided the opportunity for the conference to move beyond satisfactory into the very successful range. However, if Craig had encountered a less responsive or more defensive teacher, the outcome might have remained in the successful range rather than progressing as it did to very successful.

Conclusions

These findings support Smyth's (1985) contention that using clinical supervision, however benevolently, as a method by which a person of superior status is able to diagnose and suggest remedies in the teaching of a subordinate, also exposes a contradiction not always apparent between what we espouse and what we do. Supervision trends support the ideas of collegiality, reflection, and growth for the teacher, yet withhold these through the politics of supervisory practices (Popkewitz, 1985) which tend to be normative and sanctioning (Roberts & Blase, forthcoming).

These data suggest that conference success is greatly influenced by strategy patterns. The cases analyzed point to the fact that match between the strategy use of the supervisor and the teacher is more important than the experience levels of either participant. The most successful conferences were characterized by teacher-controlled dominance strategies, close matching of status indicators, and supervisory reliance on suggestions rather than direction, except in the case of a beginning teacher coupled with an experienced supervisor. These findings are reminiscent of Oldfather's (1991) research into the honored voice of students. It seems that teachers are very aware of supervisory strategies which honor their voice; that is, those strategies which encourage teacher expression, approach the teacher as a professional, and allow teacher-control of either issue selection or issue direction for discussion in the conference seem to promote teacher participation.

The less successful conferences may be characterized as those in which the supervisor simply talked too much, too long, or too vaguely and in which listening to the teacher and addressing teacher concerns was not given a high priority. Perhaps this indicates that communication skills necessary to effective supervision are not only verbal skills, but listening skills as well, an area seldom addressed in leadership preparation.

These findings indicate the importance of continued exploratory research on (a) the strategies, purposes, and consequences of political interaction with the conference and (b) the participants' perceptions of these strategies, purposes, and consequences and how such perceptions may affect the outcomes of instructional conferencing. It is all too apparent that structural linguistic theory alone does not give a complete picture of conference interaction. It shows only one piece that must be joined to other foci of discourse research, such as micropolitics, functional linguistic theories, and social interaction theories before we can begin to understand the complexities of the supervisory conference.

Discussion

The implications of findings from studies such as this are multifold--implications for supervisory practice, philosophy, and preparation. These findings suggest that practical benefits exist for those involved in supervisory conferences from an increased awareness of conversation consequences in interaction, an understanding of controlling versus empowering verbal strategies, and the relationship between collegial instructional conferencing and increased shared meaning and growth on the parts of each participant. Uncomplicated techniques of linguistic self-measures, such as audiotape summary and turn awareness, are easy to learn and require little time on the part of participants. Administrative policy, such as responsibility overload--too many teachers, too few supervisors, and too little interaction time obviously have a negative impact on opportunity for both quality communication interaction and reflection on that interaction. The impacts of such policies need to be addressed.

Philosophically, because conferencing agendas are rooted in the normative-instrumental, transactional setting of educational bureaucracy (Blase, 1992), it should not be surprising that supervisors tend to approach conferencing with a top-down attitude and pre-established goals. The question then becomes one of ethics and morality in a field of education that theoretically supports one paradigm (collaboration, reflection--critical praxis, humanism) and operates out of another (techno-rational--behavioristic management). Does this discontinuity mean that the field of supervision must undergo a paradigm shift before educational empowerment and democracy can become a reality or is a realignment between practitioner expectations and theorist expectation needed?

If such shifts or realignment are necessary, how should university preparatory programs, mired in the old paradigm, prepare leaders for these changes? Can programs that, by definition, promote the concept of hierarchical expertise decentralize the control of institutions which were developed to maintain the social construction of reality through limitations on access to and control of information? If such programs are developed, whose definition of competency will be used, what level of competency will be sought, and will the

designation of competency levels defeat the purpose of leveling communicative control? How will we know? As one can see, this examination of control strategies has shed but a little light on a complex topic which is in great need of research.

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Appendix

NOTE: Portions of the RightWriter summary which are not pertinent to the analysis of this study have been deleted.

<< SUMMARY **>>**

The document ST0005.DAT was analyzed using the rules for Technical report or Article writing at the College education level. It is a WordPerfect document. The marked-up copy is stored in the file ST0005.OUT.

READABILITY INDEX: 4.58 (NOTE: Investigator adds 3.0 to Index Code to compensate for narrative rather than verbal analysis.)

Number of Words in Document: 1643

Number of Unique Words in Document: 437

Number of Sentences: 125

STRENGTH INDEX: 0.45

DESCRIPTIVE INDEX: 0.50

<< END OF SUMMARY **>>**

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